1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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rated communities of the same tribe. The first may have more social contacts; the second be structurally nearer. But between Nuer tribes there is no common organization or central administration and hence no political unity that we can refer to as national. Nevertheless, adjacent tribes, and the Dinka who face them, form political systems, since the internal organization of each tribe can only be fully understood in terms of their mutual opposition, and their common opposition to the Dinka who border them.

Beyond these systems of direct political relations the whole Nuer people see themselves as a unique community and their culture as a unique culture. Opposition to their neighbours gives them a consciousness of kind and a strong sentiment of exclusiveness. A Nuer is known as such by his culture, which is very homogeneous, especially by his language, by the absence of his lower incisors, and, if he is a man, by six cuts on his brow. All Nuer live in a continuous stretch of country. There are no isolated sections. However, their feeling of community goes deeper than recognition of cultural identity. Between Nuer, wherever they hail from, and though they be strangers to one another, friendly relations are at once established when they meet outside their country, for a Nuer is never a foreigner to another as he is to a Dinka or a Shilluk. Their feeling of superiority and the contempt they show for all foreigners and their readiness to fight them are a common bond of communion, and their common tongue and values permit ready intercommunication.

Nuer are well aware of the different divisions of their country, even if they have never visited them, and they all look upon the area to the west of the Nile as their common homeland, to the occupants of which they still have distant kinship ties. People also journey to visit kinsmen in other tribes and often settle for long periods far from their homes, sometimes in different tribes, in which, if they stay there long enough, they become permanently incorporated. Constant social intercourse flows across the borders of adjacent tribes and unites their members, especially members of border communities, by many strands of kinship and affinity. If a man changes his tribe he can at once fit himself into the age-set system of the tribe of his adoption, and there is

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often co-ordination of sets between adjacent tribes. A single clan is sometimes dominant in more than one tribal area, dominant clans are linked in a general clan system, and the principal clans are found in every part of Nuerland. We have noted how in the days of ivory trading Gaajak tribesmen journeyed through the territories of other tribes as far as the Zeraf.

The limits of the tribe are therefore not the limits of social intercourse, and there are many ties between persons of one tribe and persons of another tribe. Through association with the clan system and by proximity the people of one tribe may consider themselves nearer to a second than to a third. Thus the three Eastern Jikany tribes feel a vague unity in relation to the Lou, and so do the Bor and Rengyan in relation to the Leek. But, also, individuals, and through individuals kinship groups and even a village, have a circuit of social relationships that cut across tribal divisions, so that a traveller who crosses the border of his tribe can always establish some links with individuals of the tribe he visits in virtue of which he will receive hospitality and protection. If he is wronged, his host, and not he, is involved in legal action. However, there is a kind of international law, in the recognition of conventions in certain matters, beyond political boundaries and the limits of formal law. Thus, though it is considered more risky to marry outside the tribe than within it, since divorce may prove more detrimental in that the return of bride-wealth is less certain, the rules of marriage are acknowledged on both sides and it would be considered improper to take advantage of political cleavage to break them. Tribes are thus politically exclusive groups, but they are not coterminous with an individual's sphere of social relations, though this sphere tends to follow the lines of political cleavage, in the same way as a man's district tends to be equated to his tribal segment. The relation between political structure and general social relations is discussed in the chapters that follow. Here we may note that it is desirable to distinguish between (1) political distance in the sense of structural distance between segments of a tribe, the largest political unit, and between tribes in a system of political relations; (2) general structural distance in the sense of non-political distance between various social groups in the Nuer-speaking community—non-political struc-

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484 At this season of the year[1] traversing open country is always difficult 133 and even along the paths inconvenient, especially as the land is 137 inundated at the same time. One can just see the horns of the great oxen at pasture. Only in the habitual grazing grounds on the slopes of slightly elevated ridges, where the cattle and the close-cropping sheep and goats have kept down the shorter species of grasses, is there any freedom of movement.

137 Nuerland approximately coincides with the extension of true savannah in the Sudan. Here and there are stretches of thornwood forest but they are never extensive. A belt of forest sometimes lines a river where its banks are high, *e.g.*, on the Sobat and along sections of the Bahr el Ghazal and the Bahr el Arab, but it never extends far inland. North of the Sobat, on its lower reaches, true savannah gives way to thorny savannah and beyond the southern extremities of Eastern Nuerland one enters parklike savannah forest which becomes thicker the further south one proceeds, though it always turns to marshland as the Bahr el Jebel is approached. To the south of Western Nuerland one touches the fringes of ironstone country, likewise covered with savannah forest.

133 Though thornwood forest is found along sections of the rivers, as a rule when they are in flood they have no banks and the country lying on either side of them is swamp. This is especially the case with the whole course of the Bahr el Jebel through Nuerland and the greater part of the Bahr el Ghazal. The Bahr el Zeraf channel is bounded by swamp to a lesser degree and the lower reaches of the Sobat not at all. According to my own observations the area of swamp is smaller than is generally supposed.

This vast plain is threaded with depressions which run in all directions, often crossing one another, and linking up with the main rivers. Where continuous these depressions have the appearance of small rivers, though water seldom flows in them. While rain is falling on the country the main rivers flood into these depressions threading the land with a network of waterways which prevent drainage from the saturated earth so that the rainwater lies every-

[1] [i.e., during the rain season--Analyst]